

VA Long Beach Healthcare System
Heart Failure Pocket Card

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure means that the heart cannot pump enough blood because of heart muscle damage or valve disease. You may have one or more of the following symptoms: **Shortness of breath, easy tiring, ankle swelling, and weight gain**

How to take care of your heart failure:

1. Heart failure is serious, but if you follow these instructions, it is a treatable disease. If you do not, the complications make the disease worse and harder to treat.
2. Weigh yourself daily. If you gain more than 3 pounds, you should contact your provider or call the TeleCare nurse.
3. Be sure to follow the diet instructions of salt restriction and to avoid canned foods, and to read food labels for sodium of less than 2000 mg/day.
4. Take your medicines every day as prescribed, and never to run out of it. Order refills 2 to 3 weeks in advance.

Exercise: Start with a 6-minute walk 3 times a day. Increase each week as tolerated. Exercise indoors when it is hot or cold.

What about medicines and heart failure?

Take your medicines every day as prescribed

When you have heart failure, you may be taking some of the following medicines:

1. **Diuretic** - called a “water pill”. This takes the extra fluid out of your body. (for example: furosemide)
2. **ACE inhibitor** - This helps to relax your blood vessels. You may also be taking this for high blood pressure. (for example: lisinopril or fosinopril)
3. **Beta-blockers** - These help to reduce how hard the heart has to work. (for example: carvedilol, metoprolol succinate SA (Toprol XL))
4. **Digoxin** - This strengthens the heart so that it can pump better.

You may be taking other medicines for diabetes or hypertension or high cholesterol as well as aspirin or warfarin which you should continue to take in addition to your heart failure medicines.